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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are presented for implementing the self-evaluation model for instructional programs developed at American River College (ARC). After stating the reasons for conducting program reviews, the paper describes ARC's model, which uses a mini-accreditation approach to assess the extent of goal attainment within a broad category of activities and outcomes referred to as data elements. After recommending the department/program as the unit of evaluation and a 4-year cycle for reviews, the paper identifies departmental charges as identifying goals, translating goals into specific objectives, collecting and analyzing data, writing a self-evaluation report, and arranging for an outside review. Next, suggestions are offered regarding departmental involvement, the final report, objectives, and the use of the external visiting team. Following an outline of the steps involved in setting goals and objectives, the 13 data elements required in the review process are discussed, i.e., history of the department and forecast of future trends; information on similar programs offered by nearby colleges; enrollment trends; departmental costs; student characteristics and skill levels; academic standards, and retention and achievement rates; job placement data; consumer opinion of program graduates; opinions and performance of graduates; student opinions of courses; professional growth and achievement recognition of staff; curriculum and texts; and adequacy of support functions. Optional data elements and a sample statement of student objectives are included. (HB)

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IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW: A MINI-ACCREDITATION APPROACH TO SELF-EVALUATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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The basic model for program review has been described in another document but will be summarized here as an aid to those who are not familiar with it.[1]

Why is program review needed? The bottom line answer is that program evaluation is being called for by district boards, the Board of Governors, and legislators. Presumably, in a short time such evaluation will be mandatory for all programs. Additionally, there are three basic reasons why program review is essential:

1. To do intelligent long-range planning. Admittedly, some planning will always be of the emergency, reactive type depending upon sudden enrollment and financial changes. This can be lessened, however, by continuous ongoing data collection which shows in a historical sense, long range growth potential for the program or unit being evaluated. Failing to produce such data can result in intuitive evaluation--certainly far less objective and possibly far less accurate. If a program is to be expanded, reduced, or even eliminated, it is best to have multiple sources of evidence for backing such decisions.

2. To give accountability of expenditures and establish financial needs. Any public organization must be answerable for its financial decisions. In the case of community colleges, the general public is entitled to know what the tax dollar buys. Likewise, the college with ongoing program review is in a

[1]Rasor, Richard A. A Community College Instructional Program Evaluation Model Using a Mini-Accreditation Approach. American River College, 1982.

proactive position to convince the public of future financial priorities.

3. To self validate. Evaluation is at the heart of change and individual growth. Admittedly, looking carefully at ourselves and what we collectively do can be ego threatening. Part of that threat has often been unnecessarily increased by the way some program review procedures were conducted. For example, consider how personnel in a department to be evaluated might react if:

A) evaluation was only intuitive

B) evaluation was based upon perceptions of one evaluator

C) evaluation was only based upon one or two bits of data, e.g., weekly student contact hours or drop rates

D) evaluation was done only when it was urgent-- such as with a budget crisis

E) evaluation was only conducted within contexts of cutbacks, layoffs, or decreased funding

F) evaluation completely overlooked uniqueness of a discipline

Program review should focus upon strengths of a unit while examining areas needing improvement. By being positive it avoids becoming a dreaded and hated process. The intent is to look for "things to reward and encourage" rather than "things to punish."

The Model: An Overview

The mini-accreditation approach to the program review process assesses the extent of goal attainment within a broad category of activities or outcomes that will be referred to as "data elements." Some of these data elements are mandatory within this model, while other outcomes may be voluntary.

A department (or program) is the preferred unit for evaluation. If too small, several departments can be simultaneously reviewed while still retaining discipline individuality in terms of summary data. The frequency of departmental review can fluctuate depending upon previous evaluative outcomes and community needs. A reasonable figure would be every four years. A program review calendar will be developed by the instructional office. The members of a department are collectively charged with accomplishing the following program review steps:

Step 1. Identify the goals and objectives of the department/program.

Step 2. Translate those goals/objectives into observable and measurable outcomes.

Step 3. Collect data relative to the stated goals/objectives as well as any other required elements.

Step 4. Draw inferences from all data collected and assess success of goal attainment.

Step 5. Write a self-evaluation report in terms of description, appraisal, and plan of action.

Step 6. Help arrange for an outside team to review the department's self-evaluation report and make an on-site visitation. (The outside team will also write a cover report of their own.)

Here are some general suggestions for getting the process started:

Every member in the department (including support staff) is involved with program review. The department spokesperson (program director or an elected departmental faculty member) and

the administrative dean closest to the discipline assume major responsibility for organization, assigning sub-committees, establishing time lines, and selecting data gathering instruments/procedures. Basically, the approach involves reviewing the following:

1. What has the department been trying to accomplish? (Description)
2. How well has the department accomplished those tasks? (Appraisal)
3. What changes are to be made, if any? (Plan of action)

Thus, the process includes description, appraisal, and a plan of action for every element of review--both those elements relating to goals plus those required but which are not a part of the stated goals. The final self-evaluation report is a summary somewhere in the range of 15-30 pages. In addition, an appendix is to contain supportive summary data and may run into as many pages as are necessary to substantiate the various conclusions reached in the self-evaluation report. Original or raw data which calculates into summary data are kept available but are <u>not</u> a part of the self-evaluation report.

The big task is summarizing data and determining what all of it means. Have goals been met? What shall be the department's response to the required data elements even though these may not be a part of the stated goals? What are the department's plans of action to improve its own program? The complete self-evaluation report is then duplicated with copies sent to members of the external visiting team at least two weeks before their visit on campus. (Staff recommendations will be solicited for names of

people who are to be invited by the dean of instruction as members of the external visiting team.) The visiting team's cover report (plus anv rebuttals to it) and the self-evaluation report are bound into a complete package, duplicated and distributed to the president, dean of instruction, the discipline's respective dean and members of the department.

Setting Goals/Objectives

The mini-accreditation approach conceptualizes a department/program and its respective curriculum as a "treatment" activity upon students. In other words, what effect does this treatment have upon students in terms of pre-to-post-period changes or compared against other students who have never had such experiences? Such treatment activities then become the basis for goals and objectives of the department. For example, a department may wish to specify a goal as preparing students for direct entry into a specific vocation. The treatment in this case would be all the activities that make for "preparation."

Logically feeding into the department's goals (but not restricting them) are the specific goals/objectives/criteria for each course within the department's curriculum. How did students change as a result of taking a particular course? Such course goals/objectives need to be specifically stated along with measurable criteria. Table 1, (see pages 16 & 17) Student Outcome Behavorial Objectives, is an edited example from Miami-Dade Community College District. Once the courses have measurable objectives, the department's goals come into sharper focus. For example, assume that a communications department has but four courses; speaking, reading, listening, and writing, each with

objectives and specific criteria (see Table 1). Collectively then, a departmental goal might be to improve communication skills in students who experience such course work. Of course, not all departmental goals need be tied to course goals/objectives. Furthermore, specific course objectives, while establishing a common thread across instructors who teach such classes, must also allow for teacher individuality in terms of additional objectives and methods of achieving objectives.

The departmental goals and objectives are determined by the staff members within the framework of the college's goals and objectives and given approval by the dean of instruction. It is up to those who apply the treatment activities to determine their expectations. Of course, such goals must be consistent with the institution's broader goals. Statements may be developed such as "The program will develop in students the skills for mastering upper division college work," or "The in-class computer will result in greater student learning." Thus, the first step within this section involves identifying such goals largely in conceptual terms. The second step is to produce measurable definitions or criteria for answering the question, How can we tell whether the goals and objectives of the treatment have been achieved? What observable and measurable behaviors will be performed if these objectives have been met? What behaviors will be seen if the objectives have not been met? Usually such behavioral definitions use action verbs such as identify, distinguish, describe, name, state a rule, order, demonstrate, construct, apply a rule, or interpret. Such verbs specify something in behavioral terms which

suggest "doing" rather than "knowing." Words indicating "knowing," "appreciating," or "understanding" are not action verbs, and they suggest conclusions which can only be reached inferentially from the study of behavior.

Finally, the last preparatory step involves selecting valid tests, rating instruments, and procedures to measure the attainment of goals and objectives. Such measures must reflect accurately upon the treatment activity and must be representative of skills, competencies and other criteria which a course and/or the department has set for itself.

Listed on the next few pages are thirteen required data elements. Such required data may or may not already be included as goals/objectives but must be a part of the department's self-evaluation report. Other optional data are suggested on page 15 but are intended only as a source for additional review if so desired by the staff.

Required Data Elements

1. History of department and forecast for subject matter

   This section is an overview of when the department got started, its staff and curricular growth or decline over the years, and a few statements on what the picture might look like in the future. Occupational programs must report current and projected needs in the employment market. One forecasting source for projecting demand of several academic disciplines and occupations is the computerized Eureka system available on-line in many college libraries or career centers.

2. Duplication of programs

For both transfer and occupational programs include information about nearby institutions (e.g., 30 mile radius) which offer the same or similar training in the department. For example, where can a student get similar training? What are the differences in the programs, if any?

3. Enrollment Trends

Data are gathered by examining previous records on early term enrollments per course and for the entire department over the past few years. Also include the student faculty ratio per course and the average WSCH (weekly student contact hours) for the department (total department enrollment multiplied by number of hours per week, divided by total faculty count). Usually such demographic data are already tabulated and available in instructional offices.

4. Departmental costs

With assistance from administrative personnel, the department is to determine the cost of operating their program for an academic year, including such elements as salaries, supplies, equipment and other budget items.

5. Characteristics and basic skill levels of students as compared with general student body.

Determining student demographics (age, sex, ethnicity) for a department may be accomplished with a survey. Basic skill proficiencies will have to be obtained through the assessment office and/or from central data processing.

Determine if standardized examinations (writing, reading, math) have been given through an assessment process. If so, a departmental sample of student names (or social security numbers) may be drawn and their scores examined. If data processing has the capability, obtain the assessment scores of all current students who are taking a core course(s) in the department. Occasionally a faculty member routinely gives a standardized reading or math test to students. Such procedure could be enlarged to include a random sample of students in several sections. The point is to collect data on the initial skill levels of students and, if possible, compare these students against the total student body.

6. Academic standards, grade achievement rates and retention Information is to be collected from faculty on the number and type of classroom tests given per course, additional course requirements, and information indicating the general student performance necessary to earn A-D final grades. These methods are to be summarized in a statement on what it generally requires of a student to earn specific grades in each course (combined sections). Also give data on the total percentage of students earning each final grade by each course. Such grade data may be collected from faculty but often is readily available in a computerized grade analysis report found in the instructional office.

Retention rates for each course and for the department should also be available on computerized printouts.

While a few students literally earn non-passing grades, such grades of "F" or "No-credit" are usually counted against retention measures because many students stop attending a class without officially dropping the course. A "less-than-pure" but workable retention statistic is to report the percentage of students receiving passing grades (and earning units) out of the total who started (adjusting for post-registration adds, no-shows). These data are to be reported for each course and for the entire department. Another retention statistic to be reported by occupationally oriented programs is the percentage of students successfully finishing a program (or entering the related job market even short of full training) out of the total who started at some fixed point in time, e.g., a specific year.

7. Job placement data (occupational programs only)

Occupational programs usually are required to report the percent of program "completers" who get positive oriented placement, at what salary level, and with what degree of personal satisfaction. Such summary data are also to be included in the self-evaluation report and aggregated by sex and ethnicity. If possible, compare placement data of program completers against other employees not receiving departmental training or receiving it elsewhere, e.g., Do departmentally trained students earn as much money as other employees not so trained? Finally, there is to be a statement on job market, upward mobility, and

wage potential within the general occupational field that students are being prepared for.

8. Consumer opinion of program completers

Occupational programs must include information from major employers of students on their level of satisfaction with the college's occupational program and its product (the quality of students they hire). What do prospective employers of students think of the department's entire operation? Also describe the composition, role and actual functioning of any program advisory committee.

In a similar manner, the community college's transfer oriented departments are to select a baccalaureate granting institution(s) where many of their community college transfers go. Sample their faculty with the same academic discipline (or the department chair) as to opinions toward the community college's department and the preparation of its major students for upper division work.

9. Opinion and performance of program graduates or graduated majors

Opinions of alumni are an integral part of program review. Each department needs to have a data collection system whereby one to three-year student follow-ups by specific majors are possible. Such a college wide data base would include a coding system for majors (e.g., student declaration or defined by core courses taken) which will enable later retrieval of student names, permanent addresses, and other useful information for the

department. For the transfer student it would also be highly desirable if baccalaureate granting institutions would send back to the community college student performance data which could be aggregated by major or discipline. If such a system is not yet functional, each department needs to have its own follow-up process. One method is to keep a card file on every student who takes an advanced core course(s) and who declared the proper major at the time of filling out the card. These students can then be surveyed one to three years later not only on their opinions about the community college department but also self-statements about their performance, either at the baccalaureate institution or on the job. The point is to gather some alumni data.

10. Current student opinions of courses

Prepare a general statement about overall student opinion toward the department, its courses and the quality of instruction. Various course evaluation forms may be examined for appropriateness in the department. Select approximately five to ten basic items and have all faculty members solicit student ratings in all their classes. This does not preclude having additional items for components not touched upon by the basic items. For convenience, it is best to adapt such a rating questionnaire to a computer scoring answer sheet which will enable tallying all responses across all choices. Usually such answer sheets are restricted to a five-choice format for each item. Group the answer

sheets by course and have them "scored" that way. Present summary data for each course by each item and for all courses combined.

11. Professional growth and achievement recognition of staff

A summary statement should be included in the report highlighting the professional growth of department members. Include a brief narration with examples of such activities over the past two to three years, as well as publications, awards, notable achievements and recognition. Have each faculty member prepare a current resume using an agreed upon format and include these in the appendix.

12. Curriculum and textbooks

This section should address the various relationships between student skill levels and the department's curriculum/textbooks. Place in the appendix all the official course outlines plus a listing of main required textbooks for each course. Assess the readability of the required textbooks for all entry-level courses. A section appearing in the main body of the report should address how the curriculum and textbooks fit the general goals of the college and the basic skill levels of the department's students. In other words, what kind of student audience does the department's curriculum address itself to? Finally, include a section on how the department's courses articulate with feeder high schools, baccalaureate institutions, and job skills (for occupational programs).

13. Adequacy of support functions

Information should be gathered and a summary prepared regarding needs for support personnel, equipment, materials, space allocation and budget. In other words, document, justify and prioritize the needs.

Drawing Comparisons

Some of the required data on the previously mentioned thirteen items will have limited interpretive meaning without some longitudinal comparisons or equivalent college/departmental norms. Therefore, it is in the interest of each department to start establishing meaningful reference data. If comparision data are already available, be certain to include them in the self-evaluation report.

Optional Data Elements

Listed below are some suggested additional data elements (or commentary) that may be included in the self-evaluation report.

A. Efficiency of space utilization, e.g., room size to enrollment.

B. Opinions of personnel who affect student's program entry decision.

C. Clarity of instructor's classroom objectives.

D. Adequacy of procedures used to evaluate and revise curriculum.

E. Adequacy of procedures used to assess instruction.

F. Balance in faculty workload; extent of faculty involvement with program planning.

G. Value of program to society

H. Any additional data or collective statement the department wishes to make.

Table 1

Student Outcome Behavorial Objectives[1]

Goal: Improvement of Communication Skills

Objective 1. The students shall demonstrate the ability to speak competently.

Criteria: To achieve competency a student's speaking must:

A. recognize audience and purpose when giving an impromptu or planned response;
B. contain selected and organized material;
C. use effective eye contact, voice volume, rate of speech, visual aids and other delivery techniques;
D. be expressed in clear, conventional American English.

Objective 2. The students shall demonstrate the ability to read competently.

Criteria: To achieve competency in reading a student must:

A. be able to adjust the rate of reading to material and purpose for reading;
B. define words by examining context, by using a dictionary and by applying the root-affix method;
C. identify main ideas (stated or implied) and supporting details (major and minor) in selected readings;
D. distinguish among facts, opinions and inferences in selected readings;
E. correctly determine if readings show bias, or use persuasive devices.

Objective 3. The students shall demonstrate the ability to listen competently.

Criteria: To demonstrate competency in active listening to other people, a student must:

A. identify ways of overcoming internal and external barriers to listening (e.g., anger, noise);
B. identify main ideas and important details;
C. differentiate between fact and opinion, whether stated or implied;
D. demonstrate an understanding of a speaker's purpose and organization of material;
E. demonstrate an understanding of how tone of voice, stress on words, pauses and other factors including non-verbal ones, affect the reception of messages.

Objective 4. The students shall demonstrate the ability to write competently.

Criteria: To achieve competency a student's writing must:

A. have a central idea, single thesis or theme which is supported throughout with facts or other information such as graphs, charts, pictures, tables and other visual aids;
B. contain an adequate amount of information;
C. be organized;
D. be consistent in tense and person;
E. use language appropriate to the audience and occasion;
F. observe the conventions of Edited American English in sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

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[1]Modified from: A Core Curriculum Approach to General Education. Miami-Dade Community College, June 1981.

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